




December 1999

VOTING INFORMATION NEWS

Vol. 9 No. 12

A roundup of voting news from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)  For voters, potential voters and those who assist voters.



SPECIAL EDITION

You're A New Voting Assistance Officer - What You Need To Know

The 2000 election year is just around the corner and you have just been assigned as a new Voting Assistance Officer (VAO). Your first reaction is, "what is a Voting Assistance Officer?" quickly followed by, "what are my duties as a Voting Assistance Officer?" You are not alone. The FVAP gets calls and e-mails daily from newly appointed VAOs asking the same questions. This poses an even larger problem because the year 2000 elections begin in February and all VAOs need to be prepared early. We also realize that for many of you, being the VAO is an additional duty and you want to know how to incorporate this into your already heavy work schedule. This newsletter is designed to get you started on the right foot and help you become familiar with the voting assistance program starting from the beginning.

The *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* covers the voting rights of all eligible U.S. citizens who are members of the U.S. Uniformed Services or merchant marine, their eligible family members and U.S. citizens residing outside the U.S. As the VAO, you are the designated person

assigned to assist these personnel when they are attempting to exercise their right to vote including absentee voter registration and voting procedures. Your job also includes disseminating accurate, nonpartisan voting information and conducting training workshops and program orientations for the citizens that you have been assigned to help (including eligible family members). In addition, if you are a member of the military, including noncommissioned officers, and are designated as a voting assistance officer, you are authorized in accordance with the provisions of DoD Directive 1000.4 to administer oaths in connection with voter registration and voting.

Can you accomplish this? The answer is determined by the motivation and effort you put into preparing your voting assistance plan. You will also need to establish a comfortable level of understanding of the process. So, do the research. This will help you fulfill your obligations as a VAO.

First you need to familiarize yourself with the absentee voting process. One of the best ways to do this is to visit the FVAP's website at www.fvap.ncr.gov and start exploring. This site provides a wealth of information, including a VAO training workshop presentation (coming soon) which highlights your

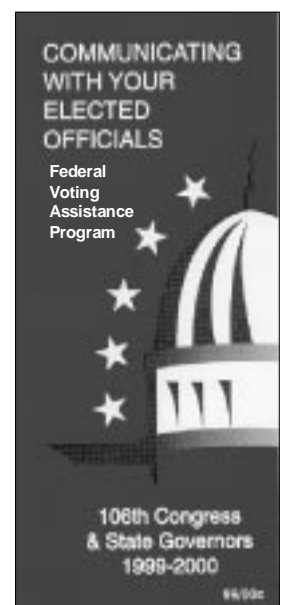
responsibilities and the resources available to you and an on-line (.pdf) version of the 2000-01 *Voting Assistance Guide*.

In addition to the training and the *Guide*, the site also contains many of the FVAP's publications. These publications include current and back-issues of this newsletter and voting news releases, and the pamphlets "How To Do It! Vote Absentee" and "Communicating With Your Elected Officials - 106th Congress & State Governors 1999-2000." Reviewing these materials will help you gain a better understanding of the absentee voting process. They are written in an easy to follow format and provide useful, timely information to keep you up to date on current issues that may affect UOCAVA voters. These materials

can be viewed page-by-page or printed for future use and distribution. The site also contains links to Federal government agencies, Congress, various U.S. citizens organizations overseas, Secretaries of State/Directors of Elections, state and local government organizations and other pertinent sites containing election information.

After you have familiarized yourself with the resources available, the next step is to organize a voting assistance plan and to determine what materials you have or need.

Many times the (See VAO, page 2)



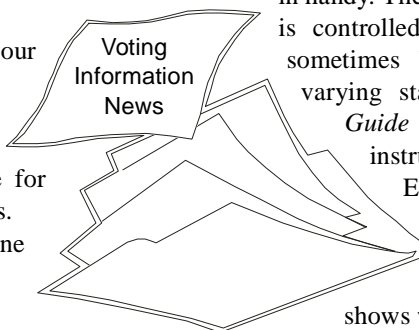
Note: This VIN should be placed in your Voting Continuity Folder for Easy Reference.

(VAO, from page 1) previous VAO will leave these materials in their "Voting Continuity Folder". If not, you should order the materials through your normal distribution channels. If you do not know what your normal distribution channels are, check with the Installation Voting Assistance Officer. If you are unable to determine who this may be, contact your Service Voting Action Officer (SVAO - contact info on page 3 and in the Introduction section of the *Guide*) for guidance on how to obtain these materials.

The following is a list of what to keep or maintain in your "Voting Continuity Folder":

- ☐ 2000-01 *Voting Assistance Guide**
- ☐ Federal Post Card Applications (FPCA - SF 76). You will need four for every person you are responsible for providing assistance, including eligible family members.
- ☐ Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots (FWAB - SF186). One per person, including eligible family members.
- ☐ Voting Information News (VIN) newsletter*
- ☐ Voting News Releases*
- ☐ Motivational Voting Posters
- ☐ 2000 Election Calendar*
- ☐ The Manual - Electronic Transmission of Election Materials for Voting Assistance Officers
- ☐ How To Do It! Vote Absentee pamphlets*
- ☐ Communicating With Your Elected Officials pamphlets*
- ☐ Your Service's current Voting Action Plan
- ☐ Current DoD Voting Action Plan and Voting Information Support Plan.

*These materials are available on-line at the FVAP Website www.fvap.ncr.gov.



The two most important materials are the FPCA and the *Guide*. The FPCA is the standard form that is accepted by the states and territories to simultaneously request registration and/or an absentee ballot. In order for an eligible U.S. citizen to participate in the absentee voting process, he or she must carefully and accurately complete the FPCA and then submit it to the proper local election official. This is where the *Guide* comes in handy. The extent and manner of FPCA usage is controlled by state and territory law and sometimes by local procedure. Because of varying state and territory procedures, the *Guide* is a compilation of specific instructions for completing the FPCA. Each state/territory section outlines the pertinent information to help a citizen register and cast an absentee ballot in their state, and shows where to mail the FPCA.

Before you begin assisting others with filling out the FPCA, you should walk through the process a couple of times, beginning with your own state. Begin by taking an FPCA and turning to your state's pages in the *Guide*. Fill out the FPCA line by line following all instructions. After you have completed the FPCA for your state, read through some of the procedures for several other states. This will help you get an appreciation for the differing requirements between the states. Remember, follow the directions carefully, paying attention to deadlines, varying specifications (registered or not registered), requirements (such as party affiliation) and make sure that the form is signed (is a witness required?) (See *VAO*, page 3)

As a Voting Assistance Officer (VAO) the *Voting Assistance Guide* and the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) are your most important tools to help citizens participate in the democratic process by voting absentee. The state-specific instructions and guidelines in the *Guide* should always be followed (carefully) when completing the FPCA.



Federal Post Card Application (FPCA or SF-76)

Federal Voting Assistance Program

Voting Information News provides information for citizens and Voting Assistance Officers and is published monthly by the FVAP.

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Note: Copying or using VIN articles in other publications, etc. is encouraged.

(VAO, from page 2) This is one of the best ways to learn how to fill out the FPCA and will help prepare you to provide assistance to other citizens. The more you understand this process, the easier it will be for you to carry out an effective voting assistance program.

Once you have completed your training on the FPCA, you should take a closer look at the other sections of the *Guide*. The *Guide* is designed as a user-friendly tool to help VAOs. It offers suggestions, instructions and important facts. The introduction section will tell you who your Service Voting Action Officer (SVAO) is and how to contact him or her. Make special note of this section, because the SVAO is your primary link to voting programs and can provide you with all sorts of information and assistance, not to mention help with obtaining your voting assistance materials. You should also carefully review Chapters 1 and 2 for further instruction about VAO duties and resources. In only thirty minutes you will have a good grasp of the overall program.

Now that you know how to provide voting assistance you should begin by getting the word out. Display Motivational Voting Posters (with your name and contact information) and election calendars to remind people about voting and upcoming elections. As the VAO you need to concentrate on providing absentee registration and voting assistance to personnel in a timely manner. All personnel need to receive yearly instruction and have access to absentee voting activities. These activities can include training sessions, registration drives,

distributing absentee voting materials, and providing support to citizens with absentee voting questions.

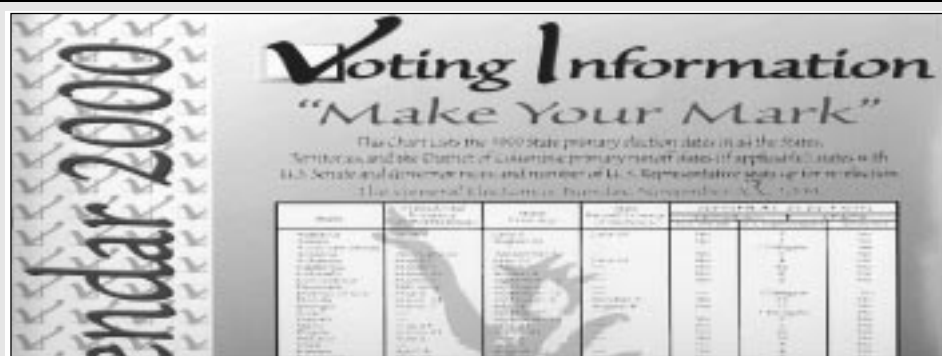
The year 2000 election cycle will begin with the New Hampshire Presidential Primary on February 1st. (ensure that the people you assist who claim New Hampshire as their voting residence state are aware of this early Primary election). Most states register voters based on a calendar year, although a few provide for permanent registration status. As the VAO you need to be prepared for these early registration and request deadlines. You should also take into account the states that require separate requests for ballots for each election and ensure that your citizens know the

requirements of their voting state. Use the *Guide* to advise citizens on the procedures and deadlines for their state. You may want to provide your citizens with a copy of their state's pages (from the *Guide*) for their future use or direct them to the FVAP Website (www.fvap.ncr.gov).

Depending on the state or territory, there may be several elections within the election cycle. As the VAO you need to keep voters informed of the election schedule (Display the Election Calendar - see sample below). A good way to spread the work about voting developments is to utilize the printed or broadcasted local media. Ask the editor of the installation or local papers to publish the election calendar and/or (See VAO, page 4)

Corrections to the 2000 Election Calendar from the November VIN Issue:

State	Presidential Primary	State Primary	State Runoff Primary	Officials To Be Nominated For The General Election		
				Federal U.S. Senators	U.S. Representatives	State Governor
Pennsylvania	April 4	April 4	—	Yes	21	No
Wyoming	—	August 22	—	Yes	1	No



Be on the look out for the 2000 Election Calendar. As soon as you receive your supply, make sure that you display it for all to see and that you provide contact information on the calendar so people can get in touch with you for voting assistance.

Voting Action Officers

Department of State: Office of American Citizens Services

Voting Action Officer: Mr. Ron Hawkins **tel:** (202) 647-9100 **tel FTS:** 8-647-6060, **fax:** (202) 647-6201
E-mail: HAWKINSRE@state.gov

Service Voting Action Officers

Dept. of the Army: Mr. Tom Feazell **tel:** (703) 325-4530 **tel DSN:** 221-4530, **fax:** (703) 325-4532, **fax DSN:** 221-4532
E-mail: feazellt@hoffman.army.mil

Dept. of the Navy: Mr. John Hillis **tel:** (901) 874-4369, **tel DSN:** 882-4369,
fax: (901) 874-2689, **fax DSN:** 882-2689 **E-mail:** p662b@persnet.navy.mil

Dept. of the Air Force: TSgt Sophia Barnard **tel:** (210) 565-2563, **toll-free:** (800) 558-1404 **tel DSN:** 665-2563,
DSN fax: 665-2543, **Commercial fax:** (210) 565-2543 **E-mail:** Sophia.Barnard@afpc.randolph.af.mil

Marine Corps: Gunnery Sergeant Dennis Hellberg **tel:** (703) 784-9511 **tel DSN:** 278-9511, **fax:** (703) 784-9827,
fax DSN: 278-9827 **E-mail:** Dennis_J_Hellberg/MR/MANPOWER@manpower.usmc.mil

U.S. Coast Guard: MCPO Jeff Creighton **tel:** (202) 267-1636, **fax:** (202) 267-4823
E-mail: jcreighton@comdt.uscg.mil

All of the above can also be reached through the DoD Voting Information Center and the FVAP Website at www.fvap.ncr.gov

(VAO, from page 3) voting notices on a regular basis. You may also write your own short articles or news releases on voting or use articles provided in this newsletter. This will be a great way to keep your citizens informed.

People need to know who you are and how to get in touch with you. The Installation Voting Action Officer and other VAOs in your chain of command are good sources of support and assistance and may be willing to work with you on your voter outreach efforts. The base or installation telephone operator should also have your contact information so they can refer the citizens requiring voting assistance to you.

Once you have followed these few simple steps, you will be better prepared to help those needing assistance with absentee voting. Get ready and open your door to these voters. You will find that helping others exercise their constitutional right to vote is a rewarding and fulfilling experience. ✓

When developing a local voting assistance plan, remember these key points!

- ✎ Visit the FVAP's Website at www.fvap.ncr.gov to learn about the absentee voting process.
- ✎ Review the on-line training and *Guide* at www.fvap.ncr.gov (coming soon!) for advice and suggestions.
- ✎ Provide assistance in a timely manner so citizens can exercise their right to vote.
- ✎ Distribute all voting materials in a timely manner.
- ✎ Make certain you have four FPCAs for each person for whom you are responsible, including family members. (Make in-hand delivery of the FPCAs by August 15th for citizens outside the U.S., September 15th for citizens within the U.S.)
- ✎ Make certain you have one FWAB for each person you are responsible for.
- ✎ Utilize the Voting Information News newsletter and distribute it to others. Extract information from this newsletter and make it available to your local media for coverage.
- ✎ Get the FVAP voting news releases and distribute the information widely.
- ✎ Display the Election Calendar poster.
- ✎ Display the motivational voting posters.
- ✎ Circulate copies of the FVAP pamphlets titled, *How To Do It! Vote Absentee* and *Communicating With Your Elected Officials*.
- ✎ Utilize the motivational Get-Out-The-Vote Public Service Announcements in print, audio and video format in local media.
- ✎ Encourage citizens to learn about the candidates, the issues and to vote.
- ✎ Encourage use of the DoD Voting Information Center.
- ✎ Use the Ombudsman Service (FVAP) when necessary.



Wow! Another new
Motivational Poster.
Please send me one!



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1155 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1155



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